

No. 1

SOUTH AFRICAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IT has already been announced in brief terms, that this Journal is intended to be auxiliary to the *South African Institution*. Opportunities will herein be afforded, of putting on record for the use of its members, whatsoever of the papers read there may appear of permanent or extensive interest; and an attempt will be made to aid the general purpose of the Institution, by collecting and disseminating such miscellaneous information, as is likely to be widely useful. It claims to be an auxiliary or instrument, however, only so far as it will pursue the same general object; and may be under obligation for a great share of the material it may contain. The Institution is no farther implicated in the conduct or management of the Journal, than by conferring this promised favour. All responsibility attached to any paper, as to its style, statements, or purport, must be considered as resting solely with its author.—It is the desire of the Editors, that the author should generally be avowed; and that nothing may appear in the Journal, which does not bear along with it the means of ascertaining to the reader its origin and authority.

The connexion which we have avowed with the *South African Institution*, renders it expedient that we should developé shortly the origin and intention of that association, as affording readily the best means of determining the nature of our present attempt. The object, generally, is the promotion of knowledge in all that relates to the Natural History and geographic, physical, and œconomic Statistics of South Africa,—the encouragement of such investigations as tend to this effect,—the collection of such objects as will confirm, augment, or diffuse our information. We record with extreme satisfaction, that the proposal to establish this Institution proceeded from the considerate and liberal patriotism of His Excellency the Governor of the Colony.* Be there enough or not at present of energy and ability in society to support it, the example presented in its origin will, we expect, have no transitory influence.

* Lieut.-General the Honorable Sir GALBRAITH LOWRY COLE, G. C. B.

The association is of too recent establishment to claim any credit for its performances. We are about to express only the desire and intention which we hope will be realized in its deeds. Since the preliminary meeting in April last, when the outline of its purpose as already defined, was considered and decided on, the progress of the association has been little else than the steps, necessary to develop the method and purpose of its procedure, or preparatory to the commencement of such researches as its object demands. It is in fact experimenting on the means of success now existing—subjecting society as it is, to an analysis which will determine its intellectual energy and practical wisdom, and demonstrate whether or no the period be come, at which the educated and intelligent of the community will combine without hesitation or prejudice, as they have done nobly and zealously elsewhere, and dedicate the unavoidable pauses of active life to the promotion of society's knowledge, comfort, and power. Our present attempt is a branch of the same experiment,—offering to such, if they be found, an organ through which they can speak in any way their talent, opportunities, or information may lead, for the awakening or satisfaction of the dormant spirit of enquiry.

Every one is aware, that the rapid advance which society now prosecutes in knowledge and power, is less owing to the solitary and surpassing efforts of the very mighty in intellect, than to the numberless and unceasing contributions of the less favoured, and to the steady and wide-spread earnestness with which men are stirred to seek and communicate whatever may benefit men. The times are characterized not by the descent of information upon us, as solitary streams rushing in overflowing grandeur from their mountain sources, but by a wide flood of knowledge reaching unto and fertilizing society over its minutest divisions. It would be vain to say, that the season of mighty men had gone by, and that another such as Newton would never arise to shed instant and abounding illumination over mysteries heretofore pryed into in vain; but it does seem less likely, that any one should now appear entertaining in himself so wide a share of all human knowledge, and prepared to add so mighty a proportion to all that was known before. To surpass as he did would seem now to require an intellect even more gigantic than his own; and as the circle of the sciences widens, it must become more and more a wonder if any one should arise, prepared as he was to produce such conspicuous advancement in them all. When crowds as new.

strive for one object, a few such giants in their array form a smaller proportion of their power; and every one may be assured, that the slighter efforts which he makes, repeated or aided by his companions, really hold a pre-eminent place amid the means of universal progress. If men associate for such purposes any where, it is scarcely possible but that something will be elicited among them, which other men will gratefully receive. There is everywhere a wide domain of the unknown around us: it is easy anywhere to reach the boundaries of what we know, and find something conjectured which needs to be confirmed, or something mysterious which needs to be searched into. In other lands where men have been most active, they feel themselves still attracted to ceaseless or augmented activity. If where most has been done, there be scarcely a thinking man who rests unstirred by the hustle and fervor of scientific research, little which is praiseworthy will be found to characterize that state of society where no corresponding impulse is felt from the movement.

If such a union among us fail or be fruitless, it cannot be because there is no need of information, or because there is nothing to be learnt. True—men have done a great deal here, in preparing the means to sustain a populous community, round the stone which used to receive the name of a passing ship, and was left in solitude; but this community has not otherwise done much to develope the condition and resources of the strange territory it is placed in; and of those who have been investigating the teeming portions of nature's domain around us, all have been foreign to the land they illustrated. If there even were here nothing requiring farther research, we should soon sink below our due share of knowledge, if we did not follow the progress men are making elsewhere. But in fact, besides the sciences which may be studied equally well, or more successfully in other countries, our land is in general estimation superabundant in things interesting and little known. The small beaten spot which men have secured amidst the immensity of attainable information, is comparatively far less here than in other districts of the world. In every department of knowledge, there must be many objects totally unknown which are of themselves likely to be useful, or which if farther investigated, would extend the usefulness of others.

It is obvious, that almost every thing on which human comfort is dependant, presents itself to us in a form somewhat different from that which it bears elsewhere. We

may instruct and be instructed, simply by observing these differences and ascertaining their origin. It is only subsequent to this process, that there is much chance of beneficial change.

Among the objects of most useful comparison in contrasting different countries, are the history and aspect of human life in them. These are with us of strange and important complexion. The interest which in other cases attaches itself to the inquiries respecting the condition and prospects of society, is here augmented by the intermixture of different races under circumstances which cannot elsewhere be studied.. It is now being ascertained, that the aspect of a *population return*, unfolds a great deal as to the morality and happiness of those included in it. The little we know of ours is by no means cheering; but on almost every inquiry of interest respecting it, there is little above an absolute want of information. In other countries no subjects attract more strongly the attention of thinking men, than the number, age, proportion, health, prospect of life, &c. of the different classes of inhabitants; and everywhere it is felt, that on few circumstances is the comfort of society more dependant, than on the knowledge and right application of the principles by which such things are regulated.

A due examination of the means by which men provide their sustenance, cannot fail to be profitable to ourselves and interesting to others. It is only, as we observed, after such inquiry, that we are prepared for beneficial alteration. Our agriculture may be condemned as comparatively slovenly and unproductive, but it does not necessarily follow, that a change to a different procedure would on that account be a profitable change. We must first compare the diminution of comfort arising from additional labour, with the increase of comfort arising from additional produce. The probability is, however, that we even have a great deal to learn, in increasing comfort, without increasing labour at all. We need to know the practice of men where circumstances are nearly similar, and cannot fail to improve by copying from lands of which the experience has been in duration at least ten times our own. It remains to be inquired, whether the labour now applied might not be directed more quickly and effectively in its processes;—whether the manuring substances may not be augmented in amount and variety;—whether, above all, calcareous manures will not be of very general and profitable application, and a smaller portion of land cultivated to the utmost

luxuriance, be not better than desultory efforts diffused over an extensive and deteriorating surface. Such considerations are equally applicable to the farm, the vineyard, and the garden; in respect to all of which there appear to be practices existing, of which it would be interesting to know the reason, if any reason exist except traditionary prejudice. It would be well to know what were the forests which seem to have long ago covered extensive districts; to inquire whether it be no more than time to stop, in the demolition of the fragments which are rapidly disappearing, or to take measures for clothing again, the wilds of monotonous barrenness which spread around us.

But we shall find attractive and profitable information, not only in attending to the things which men have used or improved, but also to those which have been hitherto scarcely subjected to their power, or are utterly beyond its reach. There are every where such things to be studied, of which many materially affect our well-being. The kingdoms of nature as they are termed, animated and inanimate, abound with them. The races of animals which are extending for our comfort, or vanishing before our power, or those others which seek their transitory enjoyments in the air, ocean, or wilderness beyond our reach, do or may in some respect exert an influence upon our peace, prospects, or pursuits. The energies of many yet unsubdued, may be rendered subservient to our purposes, or the ravages of the annoying or destructive may be prevented. In fact, there are few of such annoyances which the attention and skill of more practised generations, may not alleviate or utterly extinguish. There is no reason why we should not anticipate the same fate to the Locust, or the rust, or to the numerous maladies of domestic animals, as has already overtaken the Lion, the Elephant, and the Small-pox. But the history and habits of different objects must first be ascertained with greater accuracy. In this country the more conspicuous alone have been adequately attended to, and detailed information respecting even these, is somewhat difficult to be attained: hence arises the necessity of condensing such as we want, from the many and little accessible books in which it is contained; hence is obvious also, the advantage of collecting and exhibiting the objects themselves, and the regret which every one must feel when he reflects on the many precious opportunities which have escaped us.*

* We cannot help here alluding particularly to a superb specimen of a shark of a new genus, which might have been secured for our use about 18

It will be useless to enumerate the branches of Natural History, in which we need information; for to each of the catalogue we should have only to attach a lamentation over our deficiency; and the case will remain much as it is, until those who can observe are more widely spread, and can communicate regularly the information they acquire. Much there may be now half hidden among us, which we hope, the individuals possessing it will not grudge to confer on us.

The object of the Institution then, is, to induce men to think of such things,—to assist in the investigations of other men, and to communicate their success or failure, and the methods which led to either. From this may be correctly understood, the nature of the communications which the Journal professes to offer. It may perhaps bear little of the aspect or lofty character of a Journal of Science properly so called. It is to be expected, perhaps even hoped, that we shall not have much of the technical language of any science, without such elucidation as will render it generally understood. Endeavours will be used to give the miscellaneous department, or extracted matter, as much as possible of the same character of being generally profitable.

No other advantage than those described is expected from the sale or circulation of the Journal. If we be successful in being supported, we hope to be successful in being useful—that will be our profit. As a community, we possess a position almost unrivalled for facilities in securing information or extending it. Placed on the highway of common communication, betwixt the world's nations, whether aged in wisdom or in ignorance, or yet little more than the half-formed germ of prospective empires, we can never feel the lack of information from others:—canopied by a sky of strange and unsearched splendour; and nourished by a land of unrivalled interest; with fantastic mountains immersing their foundations in the seas, and their summits in the vapours of a hemisphere almost unknown, it will be long indeed before the means of investigation correspond to the variety and importance of the objects submitted to them: and ere we attain the great end of conceiving adequately the wisdom of their Author, many and lofty indeed must be the stages of information we ascend.

months ago, at a very trifling expence, had there been any Institution to receive it. It ultimately found its way to Paris, where it seems to have been welcomed with great satisfaction. It is and ought to stand as the Rhinoceros Typus of Dr. Smith.—See Zoological Journal, vol. page .